



FAIRNESS COMMISSIONER

COMMISSAIRE À L'ÉQUITÉ

OFFICE OF THE FAIRNESS COMMISSIONER

595 Bay Street, Suite 1201, Toronto ON M7A 2B4

Fair Registration Practices Report 2020

The Fair Registration Practices Report was created as required in the:

- Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006 (FARPACTA) s.20 and 23(1), for the regulated professions named in Schedule 1 of FARPACTA
- Health Professions Procedural Code set out in Schedule 2 of the Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA) s. 22.7(1) and 22.9(1), for health colleges

Guidelines for this report are available to download as a .pdf on the OFC website.

<https://www.fairnesscommissioner.com/en/Publications/Pages/Guidelines.aspx>

Organization: Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers

Name of the regulated profession: Social Workers

Contact Name: Lise Betteridge, Registrar and CEO

Contact Email: lbetteridge@ocswssw.org

Contact Phone Number : 416-972-9882 x225



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Qualitative Information

The following qualitative information is collected for the purpose of highlighting a regulator's enhancements to improve fair access year over year, including actions that result from recommendations made in the OFC's Assessment of Registration Practices.

For each of the categories below, where applicable, please describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year by your organization or a third-party for the purpose of changing fair access.

Please also describe the impact of these improvements/changes on applicants. If you have been working on improvements/changes over the last year that have not yet been implemented, describe your progress and the expected impact the improvements/changes will have on applicants and your organization.

Provide as much detail as possible. This can include the rationale for the improvements/changes, relevant findings from preliminary work leading up to the improvements/changes, methodology, relevant dates and anything else you think is important.

Include as much supporting material as possible to support your description (e.g., relevant reports, policies, protocols, websites, other documents and anything else you think is important). This material can be provided in the form of hyperlinks to electronic sources.

a. Requirements for registration, including acceptable alternatives

- i) Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year
 - There were no changes to the requirements for registration in 2020.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants
 - No changes
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization
 - No changes

b. Assessment of qualifications

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - There were no changes to the assessment of qualifications in 2020.



- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - No changes
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - No changes

c. Provision of timely decisions, responses, and reasons

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - Since our applications are paper based, we adapted our registration processes during the first phase of the pandemic (lockdown) while the College's physical office was closed. During that period (March to June 2020), we accepted high-priority applications for registration from individuals who had an accredited social work degree or were applying on the basis of their registration as a social worker in another Canadian province (through the Canadian Free Trade Agreement). Applicants were permitted to submit their paper application forms by email and fax and we were also accepting transcripts and other forms of confirmation of educational qualifications by email and fax from academic institutions who had suspended the mailing of these documents. We also accepted verification of membership (In Good Standing Certificates) from the other Canadian regulators by email and fax.
 - As a result of the pandemic and the limitations of paper based processes while staff have been working remotely, there has been an impact on the processing timelines of applications, particularly in the 'equivalency' stream, resulting in longer processing times and an accumulated volume of applications. Wherever possible, the College has made efforts to recognize requests received from employers for expedited reviews of applications, where registration was a required condition of employment.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - Applicants who required registration for employment purposes were able to have their applications processed during the first lockdown (March to June 2020). The ability to be registered – particularly for those who had just completed their social work degree – was key to ensuring that they were able to secure and maintain employment during the initial phases of the pandemic, where social workers were needed on the frontlines of many organizations. Although we once again had full access to our incoming mail by late June and were able to process mailed application forms again, we continued to accept application forms and supporting documents received by email throughout 2020.



- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - The adaptation involved many process changes so that we could move from a paper based system to an electronic one. The College also had to ensure there were adequate resources (staff, technological) to handle the need and volume of inquiries/requests.
 - As a result of the limitations of our registration processes being paper based, the College began to explore the option of online application processes in late 2020 with an anticipated launch date in the first quarter of 2021.

d. Fees

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - Effective January 1, 2020, the registration fee increased by \$30 to \$260 (for applicants who apply for registration before December 31 of the year in which they graduated from a social work program – "new graduate") and to \$360 for all other applicants. The registration fee continues to be pro-rated on a quarterly basis depending on the date of registration, resulting in applicants, who are registered in the second, third and fourth quarter of the calendar year, receiving a partial refund of the registration fee.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - This was a moderate increase with no discernable impact on applicants.
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - In order for the College to effectively fulfill its public protection mandate, member fees must reflect actual operating costs; maintaining regulatory operations can require an increase of the registration and annual fees. All fee changes require revisions to multiple forms of communication with applicants and members, the College website and programming changes in the College's database.

e. Timelines

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - As a result of the pandemic and the limitations of paper based processes while staff have been working remotely, there has been an impact on the processing timelines of applications, particularly in the 'equivalency' stream, resulting in longer processing times and an accumulated volume of applications. Wherever possible, the College made efforts to recognize requests we had received from employers for expedited reviews of applications, where registration was a required condition of employment.



- Included in the College's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan is a priority to enhance regulatory effectiveness by leveraging technology to improve accessibility and efficiency. The College is committed to exploring and implementing technological processes to ensure efficient and timely responses to applicants, including registration decisions.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - The temporary suspension of the review and assessment of applications in the 'equivalency' stream may have had a negative impact on applicants as, in some cases, they have waited longer for registration decisions.
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - As a result of the timeline delays and in relation to our strategic priorities, the College began to investigate the technological options available to mitigate the limitations of remote work when processes are paper based. In the next year, the College plans to add additional temporary staffing resources, launch an online application process, and move forward on its records and information management project (including the scanning of member records and incoming applications and supporting documents).

f. Policies, procedures and/or processes, including by-laws

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - As part of a cyclical review of all College policies, the language proficiency policy was reviewed and updated in 2020.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - The updates made were required to reflect changes in the language proficiency testing systems, including their delivery (i.e. from in person to internet-based) and availability (one testing system was no longer being offered).
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - There has been minimal impact. Very few applicants to the College are unable to meet the language proficiency requirement.

g. Resource for applicants

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - As described above, included in the College's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan is a priority to enhance regulatory effectiveness by leveraging technology to improve accessibility and efficiency. As a result, the paper application form for individuals who are applying on the basis of having obtained an accredited social work degree or their registration as a social worker in



another Canadian jurisdiction, was converted to a fillable PDF document, that is fully AODA compliant.

- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - The application form is easier to complete, particularly for those applicants who may require an accommodation.
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - Other than a financial impact as a result of making the forms AODA compliant, there has been no impact on the College. We will continue to explore other opportunities to improve accessibility for applicants and members.

h. Review or appeal processes

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - There were no changes to the review or appeal processes in 2020.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - No changes
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - No changes

i. Access to applicants' records

- i) Describe any improvement/changes implemented in the last year
 - There were no changes to the access of applicants' records in 2020.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - No changes
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - No changes

j. Training and resources for registration staff, Council, and committee members

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - As in previous years, all staff (including registration staff) across the College, Council members and members of the Registration Appeals Committee receive continuous extensive training pertinent to their role. This ongoing training ensures all persons involved in registration processes are current in their knowledge and competent in their role.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - By ensuring that those who are involved in the registration process receive ongoing valuable and relevant training, we are assured that



applicants will receive transparent, objective, impartial and fair registration decisions.

- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - The College is able to provide applicants with a positive registration experience because staff, council and committee members are well informed and well resourced.

k. Mutual recognition agreements

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - There were no changes related to mutual recognition agreements in 2020.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - No changes
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - No changes

l. Describing any improvements/changes implemented in the last year

- i) Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
 - In 2020, we updated our practices related to the citizenship requirement of our registration regulation. Previously, applicants who were authorized under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada) to engage in the practice of social work were registered with terms, conditions and limitations which were posted on the College's Register. These applicants now sign an *Undertaking, Agreement and Acknowledgment*. The details of their citizenship status (i.e. work permit) are no longer posted on the Register.
- ii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
 - This has been a positive change as the member's citizenship status is no longer public – something which may have had a potentially negative impact on their ability to secure employment.
- iii) Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
 - We believe that this improved process is fairer for the applicant and reduces the potential for bias or inequities resulting from their citizenship status (and work permit conditions) being made publicly available.

m. Describe any registration-related improvements/changes to your enabling legislation and/or regulations in the last year

Provide any additional information: No changes this year.



Quantitative Information

The following quantitative information is collected for the purpose of observing statistical changes and trends related to application, licensure, appeals and staffing year over year.

a. Languages

Indicate the languages in which application materials and information about the application process are available.

Language	Yes/No
English	Yes
French	Yes

Other (please specify):

b. Gender applications

Indicate the number of applicants in each category as applicable

Gender	Number of applicants
Male	243
Female	1803
None of the above	13

Additional comments:

c. Gender of members

Indicate the number of members in each category as applicable. Select the option that best corresponds to the terminology used by your organization.

Gender	Number of members
Male	2799
Female	18035
None of the above	44

Additional Comments:

For the following sections d,e & f, the OFC recognizes that the term initial education infers that applicants may receive their education in multiple jurisdictions.

For the purpose of these questions, include only the jurisdiction in which an entry-level degree, diploma or other certification required to practice the profession or trade was obtained.

d. Jurisdiction where applicants obtained their initial education

Indicate the number of applicants by the jurisdiction where they obtained their initial education in the profession or trade

Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International (list countries and # of applicants)	Unknown	Total
1693	149	106	Denmark 1 Nigeria 2 India 33 Dominica 2 Germany 1 Austria 4 Columbia 1 Hong Kong 4 France 1 Jamaica 4 Lebanon 1 Sri Lanka 2 Ireland 2 Bangladesh 1 Mauritius 1 Hungary 1 UK 2 Philippines 1 Albania 1 Total 65	46	2059

Additional comments:



e. Jurisdiction where applicants who became registered members obtained their initial education

Indicate the number of applicants who became registered members in the reporting year by the jurisdiction where they obtained their initial education in the profession or trade.

Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International (list countries and # of applicants)	Unknown	Total
1532	141	103	Brazil 1 Germany 1 Hong Kong 4 Nigeria 2 India 39 Australia 4 Lebanon 1 New Zealand 1 Jamaica 2 China 1 Ireland 2 Columbia 1 Bangladesh 1 UK 1 Philippines 1 Albania 2 Romania 1 Egypt 1 Total 66	31	1873

Additional comments:

f. Jurisdiction where members were initially trained

Indicate the total number of registered members by jurisdiction where they obtained their initial education in the profession or trade.

Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International (list countries and # of applicants)	Unknown	Total
16889	1612	1311	Albania 13 Argentina 2 Australia 16 Bangladesh 10 Belgium 3 Brazil 2 Burundi 1 Chile 2 China 1 Colombia 7 Denmark 1 Dominican Republic 1 Egypt 5 El Salvador 1 Germany 7 Guyana 5 Hong Kong 80 India 455 Iran 5 Ireland 10 Israel 17 Jamaica 20 Korea 4 Lebanon 2 Lithuania 1 Macedonia 1 Malta 1 Mauritius 2 Mexico 1 Moldova 1 Nepal 1 Netherlands 2 New Zealand 2 Nigeria 5 Norway 1	228	20878

			Pakistan 8		
			Peru 4		
			Philippines 20		
			Poland 3		
			Portugal 2		
			Romania 12		
			Russia 2		
			Scotland 9		
			Slovakia 1		
			South Africa 21		
			Sweden 3		
			Uganda 1		
			Ukraine 1		
			United Arab Emirates 1		
			U.K. 60		
			Zimbabwe 2		
			Total 838		

g. Application processed

Indicate the number of applications your organization processed in the reporting year. Enter the data by jurisdiction where applicants were initially trained in the profession, i.e. before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario.

January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
New applications received	1693	149	106	65	46	2059
Applicant actively pursuing licensing. Those who had some contact with your organization in the reporting year	404	102	14	35	20	575
Inactive applicants. Those who had no contact with your	0	0	0	0	0	0

organization in the reporting year.						
Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members <u>but did not</u> become members	0	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who became <u>fully</u> registered members	1532	141	103	66	31	1873
Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative licence <u>but were not</u> issued a licence	0	0	0	0	0	0
Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence*	0	0	0	0	0	0

- An alternative class of licence enables its holder to practice with limitations, but additional requirements must be met in order for the member to be fully licensed.

Additional comments:

h. Classes of certificate/licence

Provide a description of the classes of certificate/license offered by your organization. You should have at least one class listed.

#	Certification	Description
1	General	A member who holds a General Certificate of Registration is able to practise social work in Ontario. Members shall also use the title social worker or registered social worker and the designation RSW.
2	Inactive	A member who holds an Inactive Certificate of Registration is not able to

		practise social work in Ontario. These members can only use the title social worker or registered social worker and designation RSW, if it is immediately followed by "inactive".
3	Retired	A member who holds a Retired Certificate of Registration is not able to practise social work in Ontario. These members can only use the title social worker or registered social worker and designation RSW, if it is immediately followed by "retired".

Additional comments:

i. Reviews and appeals processed

State the number of reviews and appeals your organization processed in the reporting year. Enter the data by jurisdiction where applicants were initially trained in the profession, i.e. before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario.

January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
Applicants that were subject to an internal review or that were referred to a statutory committee of your governing council, such as	0	0	0	0	0	0

Registration Committee						
Applicants who initiated an appeal of a registration decision	5	2	0	1	0	8
Appeals hear	6	1	0	1	0	8
Registration decisions changed following an appeal	0	0	0	0	0	0

Additional comments:

j. Paid Staff

Provide the number of paid staff employed by your organization in the categories shown, as of December 31, 2020.

You may use decimals if you need to count half units. For example, on full-time employee plus one part-time employee will be equivalent to 1.5 employees.

Category	Number of staff
Total number of staff employed by the regulatory body	35.5
Number of staff involved in the appeals process	2
Number of staff involved in the registration process	9.5

Additional comments:

Submission

Name of individual with authority to sign on behalf of the organization: Lise Betteridge

Title: Registrar and CEO

Date: April 29, 2021